Washington State Department of Transportation

Washington State Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project:

INSTRUCTIONS

Prepared for:
Participating agencies

Prepared by:
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bicycle club Cascade

Washington State Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project Instructions 2011

The Washington State Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project is a statewide effort sponsored by Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), conducted in conjunction with the National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project. The work element is the development of a statewide bicyclist and pedestrian count database to establish benchmarks and track changes consistent with objectives identified in WSDOT's 2009-15 Strategic Plan and the State Bicycle Facilities and Pedestrian Walkways Plan.

The study will rely primarily on volunteers to count pedestrians and bicyclists traveling in bicycle lanes, on streets, on trails and paths, and on sidewalks across the state. An outreach effort, conducted by Cascade Bicycle Club is an important part of this project and will ensure that volunteers have all the necessary information to collect a consistent set of statewide bicycle and pedestrian counts.

This document was produced by **Cascade Bicycle Club**. Any questions can be directed to tessa.greegor@cascadebicycleclub.org

Introduction

This document provides detailed instructions on conducting bicycle and pedestrian counts as part of the WSDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project. The document first reviews the proposed dates and times, and then provides instructions for counts.

1. Count Dates and Times

Dates

Late September is the accepted annual national bicycle and pedestrian count period, however this year, the 2010 Washington State Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project dates will be in late September to coincide with universities being back in session. To reduce the chance that data is skewed by weather, sports events, or other outside factors, local participants may select a single date from the three days provided: **September 27, 28 and 29.**

Rationale for Dates

The WSDOT Count Period in late September was selected because it represents a peak period for walking and bicycling, both work and school-related. Weather conditions are generally conducive, schools are back in session, and people have returned from vacations and are back at work.

Times

Recommended time periods are identified below. The recommended time periods represent the likely busiest periods for bicycling. If peak periods vary significantly in a locality, adjusted peak periods can be chosen.

RECOMMENDED TIMES:

- Weekday, 7-9 AM
- Weekday, 4-6 PM

Rationale for Time Periods

Weekday AM peak periods were chosen since the work commute period coincides with the school commute period. Weekday PM peak periods were chosen since the afternoon peak typically has the largest volume of travelers, with commuters, school children and people running errands. Counts conducted during these periods will provide an excellent snapshot of bicycling and walking during the peak periods of the year. Actual local peak periods may vary considerably.

Weather

Weather may be a determinant in selecting one of the three proposed dates to conduct counts but a participant should not be worried if the weather is poor or unusual during the count period. Weather conditions will be recorded for each count in the Background Data Sheet and be considered as a factor in future analysis. Over time, future counts and surveys will average out and overall trends in activity will become apparent.

2. Counts

Count Variables

The proposed counts are intended to identify the numbers of bicyclists and pedestrians passing a specific point:

- on a sidewalk (both sides of street)
- path (both directions of travel)
- on-street bikeway (both directions of travel).

A person who passes by a point more than once is counted ***each time*** they pass by the point.

Count Method

The Washington Count Period will be conducted manually, by volunteer counters.
To ensure that data received from different participants is comparable and consistent; participants should agree to follow the instructions and guidelines identified below.

STEP 1: OBTAIN MATERIALS

Volunteer Instructions, Count Forms and the Background Data Sheet are available from

- WSDOT's website (http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/Count.htm), or
- Cascade Bicycle Club (tessa.greegor@cascadebicycleclub.org)

Materials can be reproduced freely. The documents provided are:

- Count Coordinator Instructions (This document)
- Volunteer Instructions and Count Form
- Background Data Sheet and Instructions

STEP 2: SELECT GENERAL COUNT LOCATIONS

Participants are asked to count from at least six locations. The following considerations and suggested criteria are provided to help in the selection of general count locations:

- bicycle and pedestrian activity areas or corridors (downtown, near school campuses, parks, large workplaces, etc.)
- representative locations in urban, suburban, and rural locations
- key corridors that can be used to gauge the impacts of future improvements
- locations where counts have been conducted historically
- locations where bicycle and pedestrian collision numbers are high
- locations where there are on-going counts being conducted by other agencies through a variety of means, including video taping
- gaps and pinch points for bicyclists and pedestrians (potential improvement areas)

Select locations that meet as many of the criteria as possible.

STEP 3: SELECT SPECIFIC COUNT LOCATIONS

Once general locations have been selected, the Local Count Coordinator will need to inspect the sites to determine exactly where counters can be positioned.

Guidelines for this inspection trip include:

- For multi-use paths and parks, locations near the major access points are best.
- For on-street bikeways, count both sides of the street. Locations where there are few if any alternative parallel routes are best.
- For traditional downtown areas, a mid-block location near the center of the downtown is best. Count bicycles and pedestrians in one direction of travel only.
- For large-scale employee campuses, either on the main access roadway or near off-street multi-use paths is best. Count everyone in both directions at one access point.
- For residential areas, locations near higher density developments or near parks and schools are the best. Count everyone in both directions at one access point, typically a sidewalk and street.

For all locations:

- Counters will need to be in a safe, visible location and should be on public property in a location that does not block pedestrians or bicyclists.
- You must receive written permission from property owners if you will be on private property.
- If at all possible locate the counters in an area that will be comfortable for
- them (shade on hot days, shelter from wind/rain/etc during inclement weather)

Rationale for Locations

The recommended locations are based on finding places where bicyclists and pedestrians can be expected to be counted, either now or after improvements have been made. The purpose of the counts is to understand peak bicycle and pedestrian activity on a typical day; while it may be useful to conduct a few counts where bicyclists and pedestrians are not expected, it is preferable to understand existing use. We do not recommend counting bicycle movements through intersections because (a) it can become extremely complicated for one counter and (2) turning movement data is of little value for this database.

STEP 4: COMPLETE THE BACKGROUND SHEET

This sheet will provide valuable information on the setting and conditions in which the counts take place. Researchers will be able to cross-tabulate things such as usage with land use, density, weather, income, and facility type.

Use the 'Background Data Sheet' to record characteristics of the count locations, available from

- WSDOT's website (http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/Count.htm)
- Cascade Bicycle Club (tessa.greegor@cascadebicycleclub.org)

STEP 5: OBTAIN COUNTERS

Each location should require one counter. Ideally, two counters will be provided per location, especially at busy intersections. You will want to identify and secure a counter for each location plus one backup counter for every 5 locations. Counters for this study will be comprised of a body of volunteers.

STEP 6: TRAIN COUNTERS
Counters will need to be trained how to complete forms and interpret field conditions. Trainings can be conducted directly prior to count times in the field, or at a separate prior training time, and re-briefed in the field.

Counters need to be instructed how to respond to questions from the public on their activities. They should also be instructed on how to fill out the count form, how to count bicyclists and pedestrians (specifically, every time a bicyclist or pedestrian passes by) and what not to count (e.g. foot or bicycle traffic on side streets adjacent to count, etc).

The Day of the Count

STEP 7: COUNTER EQUIPMENT
Counters should be provided with data sheet(s) and written instructions. Volunteers will be instructed to provide their own water, writing utensils, writing surface, and to dress appropriately for weather.

STEP 8: COUNT FORMS
Distribute count forms to counters. Count forms can be reproduced from the documents provided to you by Cascade Bicycle Club (organizer@cascadebicycleclub.org).

STEP 9: TRANSPORTING AND MANAGING COUNTERS
Counters will need to arrive at the count locations at least 15 minutes ahead of schedule. The Local Count Coordinator should visit each count location to ensure that counters are on schedule. If the count locations are numerous or dispersed, designated supervisors may be needed to visit locations.

STEP 10: QUALITY CONTROL
The Count Coordinator and any location supervisors should conduct a random review of counters during the count period to ensure they are on-duty and tabulating information correctly. Count results that vary significantly from one time period to the next or that are unusually consistent may need to be explained sufficiently to the Count Coordinator's satisfaction, or discarded.

STEP 11: COLLECTING FORMS
All forms should be collected by the Count Coordinator at the conclusion of the count period. The Count Coordinator should double-check to ensure that the count forms have been completed accurately.

STEP 12: SUBMITTING DATA
Starting in 2011 data can be submitted online by count coordinators or volunteers via WSDOT's website (http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/Count.htm). Please submit hardcopy count forms to Cascade Bicycle Club, PO Box 15165, Seattle, WA 98115, ATTN: Tessa Greegor. You can also e-mail or fax the forms to:

Email: tessa.greegor@cascadebicycleclub.org and maceki@wsdot.wa.gov

Fax: 206-522-2407